

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-05 EB-08 DODE-00 CG-00 DOTE-00
CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 INRE-00 FAA-00 L-03 SS-15
SSO-00 SP-02 NSCE-00 COME-00 /058 W
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O 301950Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2228

C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT OF SPAIN 1001

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MARR, TD
SUBJECT: OMEGA TRINIDAD

REF: PORT OF SPAIN 975

1. FM DONALDSON CALLED ME IN MARCH 30 TO MAKE SOME ADDITIONS TO HIS REMARKS OF YESTERDAY, REPORTED REFTEL. DONALDSON SAID HE HAD DISCUSSED OMEGA WITH PM WILLIAMS LATE ON MARCCH 29 AND AGAIN AT CABINET MEETING THIS MORNING, AND THAT THE PM HAD TOLD HIM THAT THE U.S. PROPOSAL FOR THE EXTENSION OF OMEGA TRINIDAD SHOULD TAKE INTO ACCOUNT "THE PAST RECORD OF BILATERAL DISCUSSIONS, AGREEMENTS AND UNDERTAKINGS ON THIS SUBJECT GOING BACK TO 1961." (FYI. DONALDSON HANDED ME A COPY OF EMBASSY NOTE NO. 11 OF JULY 23, 1965, WHICH INDICATED THAT THE OMEGA STATION WAS UNDER CONSTRUCTION AT THAT TIME; THEREFORE, THE MEANING OF HIS REFERENCE TO 1961 IS UNCLEAR TO US.)

2. DONALDSON FRANKLY ADMITTED THAT HE HIMSELF DID NOT KNOW THE EARLY HISTORY OF OMEGA TRINIDAD AND THAT SINCE WHATEVER GOT DOCUMENTS ON THE SUBJECT MAY STILL EXIST ARE SCATTERED THROUGH SEVERAL MINISTRIES, IT WOULD TAKE TIME TO ASSEMBLE THEM. NEVERTHELESS, HE UNDERSTOOD THAT IN ABOUT 1966 THERE HAD BEEN PROVISION FOR A JOINT US-TRINIDADIAN COMMITTEE ON OMEGA WITH THREE

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TRINIDADIAN MEMBERS (COMMANDER OF THE DEFENSE FORCE, JOFFRE SERRETTE, FORMER HEAD OF CIVIL SERVICE, ALAN REECE, AND THE MEA PERMSEC). HE COULD NOT SAY OFF-HAND WHETHER OR NOT THIS COMMITTEE HAD EVER MET OR WHAT ITS TERMS OF REFERENCE WERE. DONALDSON ALSO THOUGHT THAT SOME SORT OF BILATERAL DISCUSSIONS ON OMEGA HAD BEEN CARRIED OUT IN WASHINGTON IN THE MID-

SIXTIES, WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF THE TRINIDADIAN AMBASSADOR. THERE MAY ALSO HAVE BEEN OTHER POINTS OF CONTACT AND JOINT ARRANGEMENTS ON OMEGA DURING THE SIXTIES OF WHICH HE WAS NOT YET AWARE.

3. DONALDSON SAID THAT THERE SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN THE US PROPOSAL WHICH HE WOULD PRESENT TO CABINET A SUMMARY OF THE RELEVANT EARLY HISTORY OF OMEGA TRINIDAD, PARTICULARLY THAT BETWEEN 1961-65. (AT A LATER STAGE IN THE MEETING, HOWEVER, HE SEEMED TO INDICATE THAT THE POST-1965 PERIOD WAS MORE IMPORTANT.) HE IMPLIED THAT CABINET (I.E., THE PM) WOULD WANT TO CONSIDER THE NEW USG PROPOSAL IN THE LIGHT OF THOSE AGREEMENTS AND UNDER-TAKINGS WHICH HAD BEEN MADE EARLIER, CHECKING THEM FOR CONSISTENCY. THE HISTORY COULD BE EITHER A PREAMBLE OR APPENDIX TO THE PROPOSAL ITSELF. IN A CRYPTIC REFERENCE, HE SAID THAT THE AUSTRALIAN HICOM IN OTTAWA HAD CONSULTED WITH THE TRINIDADIAN HICOM THERE ON OMEGA WHEN THE US AND AUSTRALIA WERE NEGOTIATING ON OMEGA IN THE LATE SIXTIES, AND THAT CABINET WOULD HAVE INFORMATION ON THOSE DISCUSSIONS WHEN IT CONSIDERED THE US PROPOSAL. FINALLY, DONALDSON ASKED THAT THE US PROPOSAL INCLUDE A SPECIFIC TERMINATION DATE RATHER THAN MAKING IT CONTINGENT ON AN EVENT, I.E., THE START-UP OF THE AUSTRALIAN STATION.

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4. IN RESPONSE, I TOLD DONALDSON THAT WHILE I WAS FAR FROM CERTAIN THAT COMPLETE INFORMATION OF THE KIND REQUESTED WAS AVAILABLE IN WASHINGTON, EVERY EFFORT WOULD BE MADE TO PROVIDE THE GOTT AT LEAST AN HISTORICAL OUTLINE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. WHEN I ADDED THAT IN OUR VIEW THE PROPOSED ARRANGEMENTS FOR OMEGA TRINIDAD, REGARDLESS OF THE FORM THEY TOOK, WOULD BE SOMETHING NEW AND SHOULD BE COMPLETELY DIVORCED FROM THE FORMER BASES AGREEMENT, THE FM SAID HE AGREED. FINALLY, I POINTED OUT THAT THE OMEGA STATION WAS IN NEED OF SOME REPLACEMENT EQUIPMENT AND SPARE PARTS IF IT WAS TO CONTINUE OPERATING--THESE NECESSARY ITEMS HAD NOT BEEN BROUGHT IN IN RECENT MONTHS DUE TO THE UNCERTAINTY ABOUT THE STATION'S FUTURE. DONALDSON SAID HE UNDERSTOOD THE SITUATION AND FORESAW NO DIFFICULTY IN HAVING THE STATION IMPORT WHATEVER WAS REQUIRED FOR CONTINUED OPERATION.

5. COMMENT AND ACTION REQUESTED. IT WAS CLEAR THROUGHOUT OUR MEETING THAT DONALDSON WAS SEEKING TO EXPLAIN AND CONVEY SOMETHING HE DID NOT FULLY UNDERSTAND HIMSELF. IT WAS EQUALLY APPARENT THAT HIS DEMARCHE, IF NOT PRE-

CISELY WHAT HE WAS SAYING, WAS ON DIRECT INSTRUCTIONS FROM PM WILLIAMS. WHILE IT IS DIFFICULT TO GUESS EXACTLY WHAT WILLIAMS HAS IN MIND, THE MOST PROBABLE EXPLANATION FOR THE DONALDSON REQUEST IS THAT THE PM WANTS TO COMPARE THE USG'S OMEGA PROPOSALS, WHEN THEY COME, WITH WHATEVER ARRANGEMENTS HAVE BEEN MADE IN THE PAST, ESPECIALLY IN SUCH AREAS AS JOINT MANAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION, AS WELL AS TRAINING. IN ANY EVENT, IT APPEARS THAT WILLIAMS HAS BECOME PERSONALLY INVOLVED IN THE DETAILS OF OMEGA TO AN EXTENT GREATER THAN WAS DISCERNIBLE BEFORE, AND IT IS HARD TO PREDICT WHAT EFFECT, IF ANY, THIS MAY HAVE IN DELAYING THE ATTAINMENT OF A MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE SOLUTION.

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WHILE I RECOGNIZE THE POTENTIAL DIFFICULTIES IN SATISFYING DONALDSON'S FAR-FROM-PRECISE REQUEST, I BELIEVE THAT THE SUCCESS OF OUR EFFORTS TO GAIN AN EXTENSION FOR OMEGA TRINIDAD AT THIS STAGE MAY DEPEND ON OUR ABILITY TO MEET IT IN AS FORTHCOMING A MANNER AS POSSIBLE. I THEREFORE REQUEST THAT A SUMMARY HISTORY OF US-TRINIDADIAN NEGOTIATIONS, DISCUSSIONS AND BI-LATERAL ARRANGEMENTS AND ACTIVITIES BE COMPILED AND TRANSMITTED TO US ASAP, ALONG WITH THE MATERIALS REQUESTED IN REFTEL.

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